

## Introduction

*Tief und ernstlich denkende Menschen haben  
gegen das Publikum einen bösen Stand.*  
J. W.

Goethe<sup>1</sup>

### *Rickert revisited*

The Reformation and in its wake the Enlightenment caused a penetrating transformation in Germany of the medieval universities in general and of philosophy in particular. It was a change from the medieval, other-worldly scholarship supervised and ideologically drenched by the Roman-Catholic Church, to a early-modern, inner-worldly professional training of lawyers, medical doctors and protestant ministers. The theological faculty, for instance, still viewed as the first and most important faculty, was rebuilt in the 16<sup>th</sup> century into a retraining institution for catholic priests converted to Lutheran Protestantism. The Enlightenment introduced not only a secularized version of rationalism but emphasized also the utilitarian notion of a practical education of young men who after their academic training were going to function as the societal elite of the future. In other words, the post-medieval, early-modern university was in fact a professional school in which young men were trained for practical jobs in the rapidly changing society. German Romanticism of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries would soon object to this one-sided emphasis upon rational, practical and applied knowledge and allied skills, launching its ideal of *Bildung*, i.e. of an education in which students were primarily taught to cultivate and strengthen their mental as well as moral capacities. Schelling, Schleiermacher and Fichte were the first propagandists of this Romantic *Bildungsideal*, but it was perhaps best expressed by Friedrich Schiller in his inaugural address at the University of Jena in the historically so pregnant year 1789.

Schiller constructed and mutually opposed two types of academic intellectuals: the *Brotgelehrte* (the bread-scholar) and the *philosophischer Kopf* (the philosophical head). The former studies at a university in order to acquire a profitable position in society, thus trying to satisfy his petty craving for prestige. He is usually rather conservative since he loathes changes and alterations. Upon graduation he will no longer be interested in scientific and philosophical thoughts, but live

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<sup>1</sup> 'Deeply and seriously thinking people are not very popular.' J. W. Goethe, 'Betrachtungen im Sinne der Wanderer' (Contemplations in the Style of the Wayfarers), in: *Vermischte Schriften, Werke Bd. VI*, (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel Verlag, 1966), p. 459. Rickert has been deeply impressed throughout his life by the works of Goethe. It culminated in a monograph of 544 pages, which he published at the end of his life: Heinrich Rickert, *Goethes Faust. Die dramatische Einheit der Dichtung*, ('Goethe's Faust. The Dramatic Unity of the Poem'), (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1932).

intellectually on what he had piled up in his mind during his academic training. He is not interested in the intrinsic values of manual and spiritual work, but measures everything in terms of possible profits. Schiller claims that this attitude is strongly fostered by the increasing specialization of the various scientific disciplines which was already prevalent in his day.

However, Schiller continues, if young men do possess scientific talents they will protest against all this meaninglessly accumulated knowledge of details. He will experience a deep sense of aimlessness and then develop into a 'philosophical head'. This is the opposite type, i.e. the academic intellectual who, to begin with, will try to explore the limits of his own discipline, to transcend them in order to arrive at a more systematic and integrated knowledge of the world. Where the 'bread-scholar' separates, the 'philosophical head' unites! In fact he will not just learn facts by heart, but search for a real understanding of the facts, without focusing from the start on possible applications of this knowledge, let alone on the profits and prestige it may reap in the future.<sup>2</sup>

The ideal of *Bildung* in opposition to the pragmatic and utilitarian program of professional training was also the essence of Wilhelm von Humboldt's university reform which in 1809 led to the founding of the University of Berlin. It soon became the model for most German and many European universities. Humboldt's vision was that of an academic community of professors and students devoted to a life of social solitude and civil, thus also spiritual, freedom.<sup>3</sup> The university in this vision educated young men not only cognitively, but also emotionally and morally, enabling them to develop into autonomous and creative personalities. It is in this sense that the academically educated young men could contribute to society and the public sector. In other words, theirs is an indirect not a direct socio-economic and political utility and usefulness. Needless to add that the Humboldtian university was envisaged as the institutional haven of the *Geisteswissenschaften* with their emphasis upon *Verstehen* (understanding) of meanings and values in opposition to the *Naturwissenschaften* and its focus upon *Erklären* (explaining) of facts and causality.<sup>4</sup>

After roughly 1850, however, Germany went through several radical changes. Socio-economically and culturally the various German states developed from traditional-agrarian communities into modern-urban and increasingly industrial societies.<sup>5</sup> It led to a *bourgeoisie* growing in numbers and power in opposition to an equally increasing working class, causing the awakening of an initially slumbering class conflict. The Humboldtian *Bildung* was, of course, not able to prepare its students for this deeply penetrating socio-economic and societal transformation.

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<sup>2</sup> F. Schiller, *Was heisst und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?* ('What is the meaning of and for what end does one study universal history?'), in: *Schillers Werke*, vol. IV, (Frankfurt A.M.: Insel Verlag, 1966), pp. 421-438. The rather exalted tone of Schiller's address conceals the fact that he experienced considerable difficulties in his professorship, and that the sentiments of the 'bread-scholar' were not totally alien to him. According to Golo Mann, Schiller once sighed that the university could do one may not say what, if he only had married a rich wife. Golo Mann, 'Schiller als Geschichtsschreiber' ('Schiller as Historiographer'), *ibid.*, p. 890. For the context and content of this inaugural address see Rüdiger Safranski, *Friedrich Schiller oder die Erfindung des Deutschen Idealismus*, ('Friedrich Schiller and the Invention of German Idealism'), (München, Wien: Hanser Verlag, 2004), in particular pp. 306-316.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Helmuth Schelsky, *Einsamkeit und Freiheit. Idee und Gestalt der deutschen Universität und ihrer Reformen*, ('Solitude and Freedom. Idea and Structure of the German University and its Reforms'), (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1963), in particular pp. 79-130.

<sup>4</sup> See also Theodor Litt, *Wissenschaft, Bildung, Weltanschauung*, ('Science, *Bildung*, Worldview'), (Leipzig, Berlin: Teubner, 1928), in particular Chapter Two: 'Naturwissenschaft und Geisteswissenschaft in Verhältnis zur Bildung', pp. 12-36.

<sup>5</sup> The transition was, of course, not limited to Germany but rather a general European process of modernization. It was conceptualized by Ferdinand Toennies in his classic essay *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie*, ('Community and Society. Basic Concepts of Pure Sociology'), 1887, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963).

Politically, Germany was transformed by Bismarck, after the French-German war of 1870-1871, into a unified empire in which the balance of unity and diversity became a dominant political aim. There was a dire need for public administrators which were able to maintain this balance. The ideal of a generalized *Bildung* was not sufficient to satisfy this public need. At the same time, the natural sciences and their technical applications in the emerging industrial society reaped unprecedented successes which exerted strong pressures on the university to deliver practically, usefully and scientifically trained academics. In fact, after 1850 the natural sciences became the predominant methodological model for all sciences, including the humanities. In philosophy there grew a penetrating and dominant positivism which was based upon the firm belief that *Naturwissenschaft*, Natural Science, operating with exact, quantitative methods produced the only legitimate knowledge because it was applicable and useful. If there still was any valuable reason for its existence, philosophy had to be compartmentalized, in the opinion of the positivists, into several methodologies of the different scientific, specialized disciplines. There was no room any longer, it was believed, for a general, universal philosophy, since that would necessarily end up in unscientific metaphysics. Naturally, there was in the positivist view of the world and the sciences no legitimate place for metaphysical dreams and reflections.

This, of course, led again to a Romantic reaction in which once more the humanities were propagated as legitimate sciences which were logically and methodologically different, yet had to be seen philosophically on a par with the natural sciences. Social sciences such as psychology, sociology, history and even economics, it was argued, deal with human beings and their actions, emotions and thoughts, not with atoms and physical processes which unlike human beings are not related to values and meanings, do not act and interact in a meaningful manner and thus cannot be understood empathically. There is, it was argued, an essential difference between *Natur* which is driven by mindless causality and measurable objectivity, and *Geist* which on the contrary is driven by values and meanings, and by the forces of the human *Seele* and *Bewusstsein*, i.e. by the human psyche and consciousness. This essential difference cried out for a differentiation of the sciences: *Naturwissenschaft* versus *Geisteswissenschaft*. Moreover, modernization entailed indeed a process of rationalization, but that does not mean that the irrational had disappeared from the human universe. On the contrary, the more rational the scientific, technological and increasingly bureaucratic world grew, the more it seemed to escape our cognitive and emotive understanding, the more irrational factors which cannot be measured and analyzed in a natural-scientific manner, seemed to determine the economy, society and polity, and above all the human mind and soul. In fact, the ages old philosophical question as to how it could be possible to acquire rational and ordered knowledge of the world, let alone how we could begin to understand it rationally, returned in full weight and cried out for an answer.

It is at this point that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the two towering philosophers of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Kant and Hegel, and their various schools of neo-Kantianism and neo-Hegelianism regained philosophical interest. In an admittedly too rough way we could label the former as a sphere of thought in which ontology and metaphysics occupied a primary and logic and methodology a secondary position, whereas the latter focused primarily on epistemology, logic and methodology, viewing ontology and metaphysics as sub-disciplines of the latter. We return to this later, because Rickert occupied a special position in this dilemma of ontology and epistemology. At this

point it suffices to mention the fact that we will focus in the present study on neo-Kantianism, in particular on that of the South-West (or Baden) School, and again in particular on that of Heinrich Rickert. As we shall see, Rickert assumed a philosophical position which tried to bridge the dilemma of Rationalism and Romanticism, of Natural Science and (as he preferred to call it) Cultural Science, of ontology and epistemology. He designed a *modus operandi* for that which he called *heterothesis* and *heterology* which in essence, as we shall see, is a playful alternation between opposites in a dilemma. It makes sense, I think, to renew the acquaintance with this philosopher who unjustly has been largely forgotten after his death in 1936. When he is still referred to, it is usually in terms of a rejecting critique which in my observation is most of the time not based upon a serious and close reading of his texts. In fact, there are a few critical clichés about his work which are generally unfounded, yet repeated all the time.

Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936) was famous and the object of critical debates around the turn of the former century. But after World War I he fell into disrepute. In fact, it is fair to say that he was actually buried in oblivion already before his death in the 1930's. There was no interest anymore in the intricate conceptual abstractions of neo-Kantian philosophy in general and Rickert's brand of it in particular after the Great War, when young academic men, having survived the massive slaughter in and around the trenches, returned home. They were disoriented by what they saw as the Great Defeat and tried, together with their fellow Germans, to mend the fragments of their shattered lives. In fact, there was now this longing for a philosophy which would no longer focus, as Rickert did, on knowledge and thus on epistemology and logic. Instead one craved as it were for an inspiring, emotionally gratifying philosophy which would explain the intricacies of life, of being and existence, and which would satisfy the feelings of anxiety and alienation. There was above all this yearning for inspiring thinkers who surpassed the often rather authoritarian and allegedly solidly bourgeois philosophy professors at the German universities of pre-war, Wilhelmian society. Rickert was such a typical, allegedly old-fashioned university professor. Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers certainly were not.

The historian Golo Mann (1909-1994) gives in his memoirs a lively, yet devastating picture of Heinrich Rickert as a teacher and professor. When Mann started his studies at the University of Heidelberg at the end of the 1920's, he took a seminar which Rickert taught at his home. A small group of students sat around the table. Rickert entered the room and began to count the students, standing at the table, one by one. He then said: 'This is the smallest seminar since I have been a university assistant. I did not expect anything else though. Please, gentlemen, take your seat.' The seminar began with an exposition of what philosophy was all about. He explained in particular that his own philosophy was a *Wissenschaft*, whereas the fashionable philosophies of the day – he meant in particular his colleague Karl Jaspers and his former student Martin Heidegger – were in his view not scientific at all. He compared their lectures with organ concertos and added: 'Well, gentlemen, with me you will certainly not hear an organ concerto!' Mann was not amused but did at that time obviously not know that Max Weber, whom he greatly admired, used to make a similar remark in his lectures: 'If you yearn for visions, go to the cinema.' Rickert then read, Mann continues, a sentence from a publication of Heidegger and asked: 'Can anyone translate that into Latin? What cannot be translated into Latin, does not exist for me!' Yet, Rickert must have had some significance as a logician, Mann adds, since Max Weber thought so. In fact, to his hardly suppressed surprise, Weber, 'a radical democrat', and Rickert were close friends. The at that time still young and philosophically inexperienced Mann did apparently not understand what Rickert's philosophy was actually all about. He found it obviously too abstract and boring. He ends this brief recollection with a venomous remark: 'The vain old man remains for me the empty shell of a once lively and strong tradition. Consequently, after 1933 this pupil of Immanuel Kant proved to be a mask without a character behind it.' Mann left

the seminar and turned to Karl Jaspers under whose supervision he wrote his PhD-thesis in philosophy.<sup>6</sup>

Another student of Rickert, Hermann Glockner, paints quite a different picture of his teacher. Rickert, he writes, was not at all *weltfremd* (unworldly) but had a lively interest in political, economic, social and cultural issues and events. His agoraphobia, however, bound him to his home, but he did enjoy meeting people. He was in social encounters an interesting and witty conversationalist with a healthy sense of humor. As an author he set himself the aim to write clearly and with a cultivated style. He hated superficiality, but disliked as much the dragging ponderousness, empty abstractions and tiresome pedantry of most philosophers of his days. (It must be added in all honesty that Rickert, as we shall see instantly, apparently lost this buoyancy at the end of his life in the 1930's.)

Glockner still adds that Rickert was not an exact philologist, and lacked Windelband's talent for the history of philosophical ideas. He admitted that he did not possess the necessary encompassing memory. He was a system builder, although, much like Plato or Kant, he failed to complete his own philosophical system. Glockner relates that Rickert had an 'architectural talent'. Apparently not just in philosophy, because in Freiburg, where he taught at the university for many years, he lived with his family in a house which he himself had designed.<sup>7</sup>

In an interview I had with him in Munich, February 28, 1985, Rickert's youngest son, the goldsmith Franz Rickert (1904-1991)<sup>8</sup>, complained to me about the bitter atmosphere in his parents' house. One of his brothers was epileptic which his father could not bear. He was sent to an institution. Another brother, and his favorite student Emil Lask, fell in the war. The atmosphere at home was mostly depressing. Moreover, his father suffered from a neurological disorder, labored under agoraphobia, and was constantly under medication<sup>9</sup>. He complained all the time about his students and in particular about his colleagues at the university.<sup>10</sup> In fact, he grew increasingly rancorous, and was surrounded by a small band of followers who

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<sup>6</sup> 'Der eitle alte Mann bleibt für mich die leere Hülse einer ehemals lebensstarken Tradition. Als Maske, ohne Charakter dahinter, hat dieser Schüler Immanuel Kants sich dann auch 1933 erwiesen.' Golo Mann, *Erinnerungen und Gedanken. Eine Jugend in Deutschland*, (Memories and Thoughts. A Youth in Germany), (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1986), p. 291.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Hermann Glockner, 'Heinrich Rickert †', in: Heinrich Rickert, *Unmittelbarkeit und Sinndeutung. Aufsätze zur Ausgestaltung des Systems der Philosophie*, ('Directness and Interpretation of Meaning. Papers for the Construction of the System of Philosophy'), August Faust, ed., (Tübingen: Morh-Siebeck, 1939), pp. VII-XIV.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Julie Gibbons, 'Zen and the Art of Franz Rickert', in: *Craft Culture*, <http://www.craftculture.org/archive/frickert.htm> which gives an insight in Franz Rickert as craftsman and as teacher at the Academy of Arts, Munich, where he was appointed professor in 1938.

<sup>9</sup> Franz Rickert told me in the interview that his mother who was a rather accomplished sculptor, and together with the wives of Max Weber and Georg Simmel, active in the women's movement of those days, devoted her life mainly to her husband and her family. She saw to it that the philosopher took his medications on time and at regular intervals. He had many little bottles standing in a row on the mantelpiece in his study. 'She meant well, of course, but I am afraid she actually poisoned my father slowly.'

<sup>10</sup> A granddaughter of Heinrich Rickert, Mrs. Marianne Rickert Verburg from Hamburg, lived as a young girl with her grandparents in Heidelberg during the last two years of the philosopher's life. In an interview (Hamburg, October 8, 1988) she showed me many, usually brief letters and cards Rickert received from various colleagues within and outside Germany. They were mostly letters and cards of thanks for a publication Rickert had sent. Among others: A. Meinong, H. Eucken, P. Natorp, R. Otto, G. Radbruch, E. Rothacker, M. Scheler, O. Spann, R. Stammler. There are in this personal archive of Mrs. Verburg also a few notes which Rickert and Max Weber exchanged. They give some insight in the (usually rather petty) faculty politics the two of them engaged in. It dealt mainly with appointments of new faculty members. Hermann Glockner provides an interesting personal insight in the social world of academic Heidelberg in Rickert's days. Cf. his *Heidelberger Tagebuch*, ('Heidelberg Diary'), (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1969). According to Franz Rickert the details about his father and his family are correct and reliable.

supported him in his grudges.<sup>11</sup> The worst of them, according to Franz Rickert, was August Faust who turned into a radical Nazi and had a bad influence on his politically rather naive father.<sup>12</sup> I asked him about his father's political stance after 1933. He said that he was certainly not a friend of Hitler, but neither was he very brave, in particular regarding the problems of some Jewish colleagues at the university.<sup>13</sup> This stood in strong contrast to the philosopher's father, Heinrich Rickert Sr. (1833-1902), who as a liberal politician in Berlin founded in December 1890 the 'Society Against Anti-Semitism'. Franz Rickert told me that his mother for fear of the Nazi's burned after his father's death in 1936 a stack of anti-Semitic hate-letters addressed to her father in law.<sup>14</sup>

In the last years of his life Rickert was well aware of the fact that his style of thinking and the problems he addressed were no longer popular.<sup>15</sup> In a way he sympathized with the anti-rational moods of his contemporaries, as we shall see in Chapter Two. After all, as a young man he too was enthused by the exuberant writings of Nietzsche and the broody pessimism of Schopenhauer. But he soon became weary of their irrationalism and searched for a conceptual mastering of the

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<sup>11</sup> Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) who attended Rickert's lectures and seminars in Freiburg wrote in a letter to his friend Gerhard Scholem (d.d. July 25, 1921): 'Rickert ist grau und böse geworden.' ('Rickert has become grey and evil.'). In: Walter Benjamin, *Briefe I*, ('Letters, vol. I'), G. Scholem, Th. Adorno, eds., (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1978), p. 268. Although he once wrote Adorno with some pride that he had been Rickert's student, he apparently distanced himself from him after he finished his academic studies. A long letter sent from Paris to Adorno, opened with 'Mein lieber Teddie' ('My dear Teddie'), d.d. May 7, 1940. *Briefe II*, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1978), p. 857.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. August Faust, 'Sozialerziehung und Nationalerziehung', *Deutsches Bildungswesen*, July 1933. Glockner gives an interesting picture of Faust. Cf. his *o. c.*, pp. 221-245. Faust, who lived in Rickert's house, was not just his teaching assistant but also considered to be part of the family. Although Mrs. Verburg claimed that the family was unaware of his Nazi sympathies, it is unavoidable to assume that he asserted a fatal political influence on the aged and despondent Rickert who had always been a liberal politically but developed into a right-wing conservative after the defeat of World War I. That was apparently quite normal among German philosophy professors of those days. It happened, for example, also with the mathematical philosopher Gottlob Frege. Both Frege and Rickert joined the German Philosophical Society and its journal which was a right-wing split-off from the prestigious journal *Kant Studien*. It was founded by Rickert's student Bruno Bauch who after 1933 became a devoted Nazi and anti-Semite. Glockner, himself not immune to the Nazi ideology, mentions the fact that Rickert, impressed as he allegedly was by 'the national-socialist revolution', held a lecture on Fichte shortly before his death. It was, as Faust also claims, a national-socialist paean. The title (translated) was indicative: 'Fichte as a Social and National Thinker'. Glockner, *o.c.*, p. VIII. Faust, *ibid.*, p. XVIII. There is for many Germans, as the former German Kanzler Helmut Kohl once said, 'the grace of the late birth', i.e. after 1945. It may be added that obviously some Germans have, like Rickert, also experienced the grace of a timely death. See Hans Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis. Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), pp. 83-100.

<sup>13</sup> Sluga mentions in a footnote that Rickert's turn to the right caused the end of his friendly relationship with a former, Jewish student who taught at Freiburg university but was then in 1933 dismissed by rector Martin Heidegger. Rickert remained silent. Sluga, *o.c.*, p. 267, note 48. Sluga probably refers to Jonas Cohn (1869-1947), an 'extraordinary professor' for philosophy and pedagogy, who fled in 1939 to Birmingham, England, where he died after the war. Rickert did not intervene on his behalf.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted interview in Munich. See Otto Friedrich, *Before the Deluge*, (New York: Harper&Row Publ., 1972). The Dutch edition: *Vóór de zondvloed*, (Baarn: het Wereldvenster, 1972), p. 92.

<sup>15</sup> In his book on the 'philosophy of life', a current of thought which he saw as the dominant and fashionable trend in the philosophy of his days, Rickert noted that there were still small circles of thinkers who linked up with the work done by great thinkers in the past and tried to elaborate on their systems of thought. He mentioned himself as one of those, who worked in the tradition of German Idealism. Heinrich Rickert, *Die Philosophie des Lebens. Darstellung und Kritik der philosophischen Modeströmungen unserer Zeit*, ('The Philosophy of Life. Presentation and Critique of Fashionable Currents in the Philosophy of our Time'), 1920, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1922), p. 34.

eternal philosophical conflict between rationality and irrationality. He believed firmly that he found the solution of this problem in his epistemology and in particular in his philosophy of values. Yet, he was not successful in convincing his fellow philosophers and the young men and women of the Interbellum in Germany. After World War II a similar situation occurred. German and French existentialism was much more akin to the post-war sentiments of the 1950's and 1960's than Rickert's neo-Kantian epistemology and philosophy of values. Later various philosophical currents emerged which Rickert without doubt would have discounted as unscientific fads and foibles – except those that maintained some degree of rationalism. He would have labeled various brands of so-called post-modernism as specimens of a fashionable and philosophically objectionable irrationalism. He would in all probability have appraised positively certain trends in analytic philosophy, in particular its so-called 'linguistic turn'.<sup>16</sup>

Lately, however, there is a renewed interest in the neo-Kantianism of the so-called South-West German School. Rickert's *opus magnum* on historical methodology, *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* was translated into English, albeit in an abridged edition.<sup>17</sup> Rickert's shorter version of this voluminous book, *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft*, was reprinted in Germany in a paperback edition, while a volume of his main essays appeared in print recently.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, the philosophy department of the University of Düsseldorf has opened a *Heinrich Rickert Research Institute*, the main objective of which is the publication of Rickert's collected works in fifteen volumes.<sup>19</sup>

### *Motives*

The present book is based on a close but critical reading of Rickert's texts, and tries to reproduce his often complex and abstract ideas in a generally understandable language. Despite the yet pristine Rickert-renaissance it should still be explained, why one would actually take on such a rather laborious task. There are, of course, various motives for writing about a particular philosopher. Usually there is, to begin with, an irrational, esthetic motive, which Rickert would find philosophically inadmissible, but should not be kept secret. I have been in sympathy with Rickert's style of thinking and writing ever since I began to read his books in the 1970's, inspired to do so by Max Weber's essays on the logic of the social sciences. Weber was obviously influenced by Rickert's epistemology and philosophy of values. His references to this kind of thinking made me anxious to read the philosopher himself. It was then my experience that, while reading his less complex and intellectually more easily accessible texts, such as the small volume on the cultural and the natural sciences, or

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Richard Rorty (ed.), *The Linguistic Turn*, 1967, (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> Heinrich Rickert, *The Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science. A Logical Introduction to the Historical Sciences* (abridged edition), edited and translated by Guy Oakes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). A rare study in the 1960's was Hermann Seidel, *Wert und Wirklichkeit in der Philosophie Heinrich Rickerts* ('Value and Reality in Heinrich Rickert's Philosophy'), (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1968.) A recent, voluminous study is Christian Krijnen, *Nachmetaphysischer Sinn*, ('Postmetaphysical Sense'), (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> Heinrich Rickert, *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft*, (Cultural Science and Natural Science), 1926, (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1986). *Philosophische Aufsätze* (Philosophical Papers), edited and introduced by Rainer A. Bast, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> See the website [www.phil-fak.uni.duesseldorf.de/philo/rickert](http://www.phil-fak.uni.duesseldorf.de/philo/rickert). It is the website of the 'Heinrich Rickert Forschungsstelle' of the University of Düsseldorf, Germany, of which professor Rainer A. Bast, PhD is the managing director.

his critique of the vitalistic philosophies of his days,<sup>20</sup> one meets a philosopher who is a lively thinker and who at times writes in an ironic way – an experience which is quite different from the one Golo Mann described in his memoirs. Certainly, Rickert excels repeatedly in extremely complex and abstract thoughts, and sometimes gets himself lost on the way, but he is nevertheless mostly able to express his thoughts clearly and understandably. In fact, after a while, after one has seriously tried to understand his thoughts and ideas, one actually begins to like his style of thinking, arguing and writing. I for my part began even to develop some sort of emotional liking of the man as a thinker which, of course, does not preclude a critical stance towards him. After all, is this not the original meaning of the word *philosophy*?

In one of my interviews with Franz Rickert, I told him that reading his father's texts I got the impression as if he was talking to me, although he never addresses the reader directly. He smiled and then told me that this was almost literally true, since his father did not write his articles and books, but dictated them – not to a secretary, because he could not bear someone in his study, when he was at work. A friend of his around the turn of the century gave him a 'Parlograph' which he had bought in America. One spoke into a kind of huge horn and the sounds were then 'printed' into roles of wax. The large house in Heidelberg had a small room – the *Parlographenzimmer* – in which a secretary typed the spoken texts on a type writer. The philosopher now had a written text which he edited by hand. The edited text was typed again, and then sent to the publisher. The wax roles were recycled: they were wiped out – a task Franz Rickert performed as a young boy – and used again. 'The house always had this penetrating smell of bee wax', he recalled.<sup>21</sup>

One of the consequences of this *parlando* writing technique is repetition. Anyone who teaches courses realizes that one will often repeat subjects and ideas in later lectures. That is, to a certain degree, a helpful technique as students get the opportunity to grasp what the course really is all about. Because the reader of Rickert's texts gets the impression of sitting in his lecture hall, or in his study, listening to his expositions, he is helped to get acquainted gradually with his style of thinking and with the main themes of his idiosyncratic philosophy. At regular intervals Rickert interrupts his stream of thought in order to recapitulate what he has just said in a summarizing fashion. It is obvious that he finds this helpful. It organizes his thoughts, it helps him to remain on the main track. Yet, in that he is not always successful, as we shall see in due time. Also in this respect he was a student of

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<sup>20</sup> Heinrich Rickert, *Die Philosophie des Lebens*, o.c.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted interview with Franz Rickert. Glockner who rented for a while a room in Rickert's house as did the literary historian Ernst Robert Curtius (1886-1956), and the previously mentioned August Faust, gives a slightly different story. In a discussion with Curtius about Rickert's writing habit Glockner mentions the fact that the 'parlograph' was eventually set aside because the secretary could not handle it. Rickert then dictated his texts to Frau Pfeiffer, without paying any attention to punctuation in the often very long sentences, to orthography of the philosophical concepts, and to the insertion of footnotes. That would have interrupted his stream of thoughts. The typed manuscript, a first draft, was next drastically edited by hand, and dictated once more to the typing secretary. This was, Glockner relates, sometimes repeated four or five times. The texts were then given to Rickert's closest assistants for comments on clarity and readability. This dictating procedure, Glockner concludes, made the texts too broad and too long. Rickert should have been more efficient. But Curtius defends Rickert: 'An ingenious author (...) always imagines, also when he dictates, readers who are as smart and educated as he himself is; never a bunch of unknowing students who resist conceptual thought.' ('Ein geistreicher Schriftsteller (...) stellt sich auch beim Diktieren immer nur Leser vor, die so klug und gebildet sind wie er selbst; niemals jedoch einen Haufen unwissender und begriffstutziger Studenten.') Glockner, o. c., p. 255f.



Immanuel Kant who toiled on his publications and often got lost likewise in the thicket of his complex thoughts.

There was still another, equally unphilosophical motive to subject Rickert's thoughts and ideas to closer scrutiny. This motive was less esthetic, more or less socio-psychological. It is intriguing that there was this initially famous and respected philosopher, widely read, applauded and criticized in the decades before World War I, and suddenly, within one or two decades, he was set aside and next forgotten. Since I became increasingly critical of vitalistic philosophers from Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Bergson to Dilthey and Scheler, and since I felt estranged also from currents like existentialism and phenomenology, let alone structuralism and so-called post-modernism, I became curious as to what Rickert's rationalism was actually all about. The sentiments aired by Golo Mann, and shared by many in his days and in later decades, were misleading, certainly when they were not based on a careful reading of his texts. Rickert, I thought soon after I began to subject his publications to a close reading, was not at all a dusty, humorless, old-fashioned thinker. He deserved, it was my contention, a serious re-appraisal.

But there is a more fundamental, methodological motive why it does make sense to get involved in Rickert's thinking and writing. His ideas about values, culture, and the generalizing (natural-scientific) and individualizing (cultural-scientific) concept formations had a decisive influence upon the sociologist, whom I have always considered to be the most influential and important one in sociology, which is my field of expertise: Max Weber. Rickert and Weber were friends during their younger years in Berlin, and they were eventually colleagues at the universities of Freiburg and Heidelberg. Reading and re-reading Weber's methodological papers in particular demonstrated to me that one could not understand his brand of sociology which he called *verstehende Soziologie* correctly, if one did not know and understand Rickert's philosophical, methodological and logical writings. To mention one simple point, the idea of a *verstehende Soziologie* is misunderstood, if one ties Weber's rational notion of *Verstehen* to Dilthey's conception of it and views it as a psychologically oriented sociology. Also Weber's technique of constructing ideal types (*reine Typen, Idealtypen*) is misunderstood, if one has not learnt what the adjectives *transzendental* (a priori) and *rein* (pure) mean in neo-Kantian epistemology. Due to Rickert, Weber employed a neo-Kantian methodology and was not a Husserlian phenomenologist, let alone an adherent of one or the other kind of vitalism or psychologism. In the last chapter, all this will be discussed in more detail.<sup>22</sup> We will then also see how Rickert's philosophy had a strong echo on other philosophers like Georg Simmel, Gustav Radbruch, Emil Lask and Karl Mannheim.

#### *Rickert's philosophical relevance argued e contrario*

These rather personal motives are, of course, not a sufficient reason for a detailed representation and analysis of Rickert's writings. Why should one today pay attention to these often complex and at times warped thoughts and reflections, and subject them to a close reading? Most of his critics have failed to do this, why should we?

It is the task of the following chapters to demonstrate why Rickert's neo-Kantian (or maybe better post-Kantian) *transcendentalism* is less old-fashioned and out of date than it is usually believed to be. At this point, its philosophical relevance

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Guy Oakes, *Weber and Rickert. Concept Formation in the Cultural Sciences*, (Cambridge, Ma.: The MIT Press, 1988). Thomas Burger, *Max Weber's Theory of Concept Formation. History, Laws, and Ideal Types*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1976).

can only be painted preliminarily in some very broad and thus necessarily not very subtle outlines. To begin with, loyal to Kant's three Critiques Rickert's systematic philosophy was solidly based upon epistemology. The rather traditional epistemological questions he addressed as to the intricate relationships between knowledge and reality, between subjects and objects, between values and facts have not been answered satisfactorily by his critics. His detailed analyses in epistemology were usually simply brushed aside, in particular by those philosophers who superimposed ontology on epistemology. Likewise his methodological demarcation of Natural Science (*Naturwissenschaft*) and Cultural Science (*Kulturwissenschaft*) was systematically misinterpreted, because its formal logic was replaced by a substantial ontological juxtaposition of 'nature' versus 'culture'. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

In this section I shall try to argue in favor of Rickert's philosophical relevance by representing briefly and rejecting critically the usual objections against neo-Kantianism in general and Rickert's system in particular. It is, in other words, an argument *e contrario* which will be formulated more positively in the succeeding chapters of this study.

It is, to begin with, somewhat rash, of course, to lump philosophical currents with obvious internal differences, together into a few paradigms, but this is legitimate if it sheds some light on the question why Rickert's philosophy has been neglected in the former century and why this neglect was and still is uncalled for. There was the predominantly European ontological opposition to transcendentalist epistemology, launched in particular (but not exclusively) by Eduard Hartmann.<sup>23</sup> In fact, an 'ontological primacy' was juxtaposed to the alleged epistemological primacy of Kant and a neo-Kantian like Rickert. The main stumbling block was and still is Kant's conviction that the thing-in-itself (*das Ding-an-sich*) cannot be known. Reality as it exists outside human consciousness cannot be known without the structuring of the experiences by means of the a priori forms of perception (*Anschauung*), time and space, and the a priori categories of reason (*Verstand*), such as quality, quantity, relations and modality. This has led to two misconceptions. First, it was and often still is believed that Kant denied the existence of reality outside consciousness which was then called his Idealism. Yet, he has stated repeatedly that this was not his position, emphasizing time and again the objective, autonomous existence of the thing-in-itself, but adding that it cannot be known as such without the interference of the senses (structured by the a priori forms time and space) and the a priori categories. This was the essence of the juxtaposition of what he called the *noumenon* and the *phaenomenon* – a position, incidentally, which was inspired by Hume's pair of concepts *sensation* and *reflexion*. (Hume's impact on Kant and the neo-Kantians should not be underestimated. It was, to say the least, a strong source of inspiration.) In any case, if one wants to maintain the opposition of Idealism versus Realism one should bear in mind that Kant and the neo-Kantians were not at all anti-realistic. As we will see in due time, certainly Rickert's epistemology and philosophy of values was not. His *transcendentalism* was in fact a grand attempt to reconcile ontology and epistemology.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Eduard Hartmann, *Grundzüge einer Metaphysik der Erkenntnis*, ('Essential Features of a Metaphysics of Knowledge'), 1921, (Berlin, Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1925). As was quite usual in those days (Rickert did the same), Hartmann criticizes neo-Kantian epistemology without mentioning any of its authors. As the title of his book indicates, Hartmann tried to replace transcendentalist and idealist epistemology by an ontology which in the end is metaphysical.

A second misconception of the (neo-)Kantian epistemological primacy was the idea that its alleged Idealism was also a one-sided rationalism. But here again, Kant and certainly a neo-Kantian like Rickert tried to balance rationalism and irrationalism. As we will see in Chapter Two Rickert did indeed reject the one-sided irrationalism of various strands of vitalism (Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Dilthey, Bergson, Scheler, etc.), but this did not at all mean that he neglected the irrational forces in life and reality. It was in his view the prime task of the sciences and philosophy to rationalize the irrationality of reality-in-itself. Each attempt to understand it, is an attempt to grasp it rationally by means of the a priori categories. This is thus not a denial of irrationality and irrational forces. The main agenda of neo-Kantianism was a rational understanding of the irrational by means of the a priori categories. It is absurd to accuse Rickert of a one-sided rationalism that denies the existence, importance and influence of irrationalism. The ‘data’ which enter man’s consciousness through the senses are as such a disorganized and irrational mass which is being put in a rational order by the a priori categories, and, as we shall see in greater detail, by the transcendental and ‘objective’ formal values as well. Yet, he did not pretend, as the vitalists do with the help of their category ‘Life’ and their emphasis upon intuition, to be able to penetrate into the irrationality of reality-as-such.

The ‘ontological primacy’ vis-à-vis the epistemological primacy has inspired and reinvigorated the nineteenth century vitalism (*Lebensphilosophie*) of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. Despite severe internal differences, vitalistic ontology and its inherent irrationalism<sup>24</sup> penetrated deeply into twentieth century philosophy, after World War I first, and then under various disguises, such as French and German existentialism and certain strands of post-modernism, again after World War II. Not Kant, the summit of transcendentalist epistemology, was any longer the fountain of philosophical thoughts and insights, but Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, a vitalistically interpreted (and therefore misinterpreted) Darwin, and above all Heidegger, were the giants on the shoulders of whom various philosophers stood and are still standing.

A common trait of this ontological and vitalistic rejection of neo-Kantian epistemology was and still is its anti-normative stance.<sup>25</sup> As we shall see in the fourth chapter, Rickert emphasized the sociological fact of man’s inherent attachment to values (*Wertbezogenheit*), but if it comes to the scientific approach to reality – and he defined philosophy as a scientific enterprise – one should refrain from evaluating, normative judgments (*Wertungsfreiheit*). This position, as is well known, was adopted also by Max Weber in his logic of the social sciences. This has probably been the greatest stumbling block for the critics of neo-Kantian epistemology. The Kantian concept of critique, as in the ‘Critique of Pure Reason’, was of course not at all socio-

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<sup>24</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche and Henri Bergson were, of course, the most influential philosophers of vitalism. Rickert’s interpretation of their brands of vitalism will be discussed in the second chapter.

<sup>25</sup> The normative, moral and political dimensions of these intellectual giants (even if they were illegitimately imposed, as in the case of Darwin) have had a great influence on philosophy and the social sciences. The political component of Heidegger’s ontology in particular has been broadly discussed. Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *L’ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger*, (‘The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger’), (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1988). Victor Farias, *Heidegger and Nazism*, 1987, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989). Rüdiger Safranski, *Ein Meister aus Deutschland. Heidegger und seine Zeit*, (‘A Master from Germany. Heidegger and his Time’), (München, Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1994). Heidegger was a student of Rickert and despite philosophical disagreements remained, as Mrs. Verburg told me, a friend of the family. See Martin Heidegger, Heinrich Rickert, *Briefe 1912 bis 1933 und andere Dokumente*, edited by Alfred Denker, (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 2002).

political and thus allegedly ‘concrete’, but epistemological and therefore allegedly ‘abstract’.

If one keeps in mind that transcendentalist epistemology is not one-sidedly idealistic and rationalistic and if one seriously listens to Rickert’s critique of vitalism and its irrationalism, one will not be convinced by the arguments in favor of the ontological primacy. It becomes obvious that Rickert’s analyses of the traditional philosophical questions as to the relationships of subjects and objects, of reality and consciousness, and of reality and values are not at all obsolete. Also his logical rather than ontological demarcation of Natural Science and Cultural Science as two mutually complementary approaches to reality deserves closer attention than it received in the last century.

Rickert’s critical analysis of irrationalism as a fashionable current in the philosophy of his days is still much up-to-date in view of various popular so-called post-modernist philosophies which replace ‘abstract’ analytic thought by ‘concrete’ aesthetic and emotional reflections.<sup>26</sup> And also his emphasis upon the need to abstain from value-judgments and normative evaluations in philosophy and the cultural sciences deserves renewed attention today – a position also taken by Max Weber, whose logic of the social sciences was severely criticized by the adherents of the so-called Frankfurt School during the politically and intellectually turbulent 1960’s and 1970’s.<sup>27</sup> Also on this issue critics failed to understand the analytic distinction between ‘value relevance’ (*Wertverbundenheit*) as a fact and as an ‘abstaining from value judgments’ (*Wertungsfreiheit*) as a methodological norm and democratic value. This will be discussed in more detail later. It suffices here to underline that also in this respect Rickert’s philosophy is not at all the kind of obsolete *Fremdkörper* most of his critics have declared it to be. The problem is that these critics usually did not carefully read and re-read Rickert’s books and articles. They usually quoted former critics, and almost blindly copied their often mistaken views and conclusions.

After World War II Anglo-Saxon philosophy in particular developed in the positivistic, analytic direction. There are, of course, intrinsic differences within this trend which was at first inspired by the pre-war Vienna Circle (Carnap, Neurath) and developed later in England, where Russell first and Wittgenstein next exerted a decisive impact on contemporary philosophical thought. The latter’s focus on language and speech led to a paradigmatic revolution which has aptly been termed the Linguistic Turn.<sup>28</sup> There is admittedly a world of difference between the rather Germanic way of thinking and writing of Rickert and the infinitely more lucid thoughts and sentences of most Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophers. Yet, as the following chapters hopefully will indicate there is also in Rickert’s transcendentalism a resemblance with the basic positions and tenets of analytic philosophers. Rickert rarely mentioned fellow philosophers by name but he was, as we shall see, impressed and influenced by the mathematical theories of Frege, who was in a sense the grandfather of analytic philosophy. For instance, although he did not mention his

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<sup>26</sup> The popular, well written publications of Richard Rorty come to mind here. Cf. in particular his volumes of essays *Contingency, irony and solidarity*, 1989, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, (Idem, 1991).

<sup>27</sup> The so-called *kritische Theorie* of the *Frankfurter Schule* rejected the abstaining of value-judgments in the social sciences and in social philosophy, yet engaged in epistemological reflections. Jürgen Habermas, for instance, did not ignore Rickert’s epistemology as most vitalists have done, but subjected it to a critical and extensive analysis. See his ‘Ein Literaturbericht (1967): Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften’, in: Jürgen Habermas, *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften* (On the Logic of the Social Sciences), (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), pp. 71-320.

<sup>28</sup> Richard M. Rorty (ed.), *o.c.*, 1992.

*Begriffsschrift* (conceptual script), Rickert was like Frege constantly in search of words which could catch meanings in an analytically clear manner. He complained time and again about the fact that he did not possess such an analytic language, and was doomed to express his thoughts in everyday life language. That led him to a verbosity which he regretted thoroughly. He died in 1936 and could thus not witness the Linguistic Turn. But it seems to me that he would be much in agreement with the basic tenets of it. It would, for instance, be interesting to learn how he would have reacted to Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* of 1953. He would reject the aphoristic approach since he believed in the essentially systematic nature of philosophy. But he would be in agreement with several of its thoughts and statements. Particularly Rickert's concept of the meaning bestowing act (*Aktsinn*), to be discussed in detail later, comes close to Wittgenstein's concept of 'language game' and his linguistic behaviorism. There are, to use a Wittgensteinian concept, a couple of 'family resemblances'.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, it seems today that analytic philosophy has developed into a kind of orthodoxy which has acquired rather scholastic characteristics. If that is correct, contemporary philosophy is in need of a renaissance which, as was the nature also of the Renaissance of the sixteenth century, should start with a return to the classics in order to open new avenues towards the future. One of these classics is definitely Immanuel Kant. The epistemological primacy of his critical, transcendental philosophy is again attracting much attention these days. As no other philosopher Heinrich Rickert has made an ongoing attempt to go beyond Kant by constructing a philosophical system in which traditional ontological, logical, epistemological and methodological problems are discussed, analyzed and sometimes even solved. For example, as we shall see in Chapter Five, Rickert resolves the alleged opposition of the natural and the cultural sciences by a constructed continuum which, if taken seriously, is able to put an end to the methodical war (*Methodenstreit*) that raged in the social sciences and in the philosophical debates of the past century.<sup>30</sup>

#### *Systematic philosophy and heterology*

Before we delve into the complex world of Rickert's philosophy, we should try to grasp his idiosyncratic approach which he did not outline specifically but runs as a continuous thread through all of his thinking and writing. There are three elements in particular that stand out in this approach, namely the repeated emphasis upon the systematic nature of philosophy, the constant application of heterology, and the persistent rejection of psychologism.

As we shall see later, Rickert rejected a predominance of metaphysics in philosophy. To him philosophy is an autonomous science alongside the specialized (natural and cultural) sciences. It is founded upon a distinct (transcendentalist) ontology and epistemology and subjected to the laws and norms of formal logic. It also has its specific object of investigation and here lies the great difference between philosophy and the other sciences whose objects are necessarily specialized compartments of reality as a whole. Whereas we experience the world, including ourselves, pre-reflectively as an undifferentiated whole, each natural science and each cultural science investigates its own particular, specialized part of reality. Philosophy, on the contrary, should subject *das Weltall*, that is reality-in-its-totality, reality-*in-toto*

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<sup>29</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976), para67, p. 32e.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Theodor W. Adorno c.s. (eds.), *Der Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie* (The Positivism Conflict in German Sociology), 1969, (Neuwied, Berlin: Luchterhand Verlag, 1972).

(a concept, incidentally, not used by Rickert) to investigation and concept formation, lest it loses its legitimate, autonomous place in the realm of sciences. This encompassing object needs, of course, a systematic, non-specialized approach. Philosophy is systematic or it is nothing!<sup>31</sup> This has ontological and epistemological consequences. Ontologically Rickert distinguishes different yet related realities which he calls ‘realms’: the first realm consists of observable objects (including man’s psyche), the second realm consists of understandable meanings and values, and the third realm, which connects the former two, is the reality of the transcendental I which links the formal and abstract values to the substantial and concrete objects in a meaning bestowing act (*Sinnakt*). As we shall see later, Rickert distinguished finally a fourth realm of this total reality, the metaphysical Beyond. This fourth realm, however, is no longer part of scientific philosophy because its concepts are similes, symbols, allegories. It is the abode of normative worldviews which yield not knowledge but faith.

In order to realize such a systematic approach successfully, the philosopher must be able to bridge the alternatives and opposites of various epistemological dilemmas, otherwise he maintains a conceptual fragmentation of reality-*in-toto*. Rickert’s concept formation therefore operates with opposite pairs which do not exclude but include each other: subject and object, immanence and transcendence, theoretical thinking and non-theoretical thinking, thinking and acting, form and substance, identity and difference, empirical (sensual) reality and non-empirical (non-sensual) reality, being and validity, facts and values, Natural Science and Cultural Science, etc. These conceptual pairs are not each other’s opposites, as in Hegel’s thesis and antithesis which are then ‘lifted up’ (*aufgehoben*) into a synthesis that poses a new thesis. They constitute, on the contrary, a mutually inclusive *heterothesis* in which the autonomy of the pairs is not dissolved into a synthesis, but fully maintained.<sup>32</sup> It is the systematic cross-reference of polar concepts. The meaning of the one is explained in terms of the opposite meaning of the other.

Often such heterological arguments border on tautologies. For instance, he fiercely and recurrently criticizes those philosophers who proclaim the end of systematic philosophy because according to them modern philosophy could only focus adequately on parts and components of reality, not on a supposedly total reality. He then argues that it is only possible to think and talk about parts and components, if there is a conception of a totality of which they are parts and components. But such tautologies emerge only when one ‘ontologizes’ one’s concepts. If they are kept analytical, that is *a priori*, transcendental, heterology and heterothesis will not be tautological. The heterological approach, as will be seen repeatedly later, rather intends to preclude the rigidity of ‘ontologized’ conceptualizations. Due to heterothesis, Rickert’s concepts are not static, but flexible. Concepts, he says time and again in a typically Kantian vein, do not depict a static reality, as is done by the so-called *Abbildlogik* – the logic which views concepts as pictures or mirrors of reality. They instead demarcate like pickets an eternally changing and moving reality. In a

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<sup>31</sup> See especially the first two chapters of his *Allgemeine Grundlegung der Philosophie*, (‘General Foundation of Philosophy’), (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1921), pp. 1-14; 14-24. In his doctoral dissertation and first book sized publication Rickert already emphasized the systematic nature of each science, including philosophy. See Heinrich Rickert, *Zur Lehre von der Definition*, (‘On the Theory of the Definition’), 1888, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1929, 3<sup>rd</sup> improved ed.), p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> See e.g. Heinrich Rickert, *ibid.*, pp. 50-57. Also Heinrich Rickert, *Grundprobleme der Philosophie. Methodologie. Ontologie. Anthropologie*, (‘Fundamental Problems of Philosophy. Methodology. Ontology. Anthropology’), (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1934), para 7: ‘Philosophie und Heterologie’, pp. 39-47. See also Christian Krijnen, *op. cit.*, pp. 227-298.

sense, reality lies or moves in the 'space' between the heterologically juxtaposed concepts which are, as we shall see, *a priori*, transcendental, to boot.

The main heterological pair of concepts is the 'real' reality of objects vis-à-vis the 'virtual' reality of values. It is a crucial heterology. Once more, Rickert's basic intention was to restore and maintain the traditional idea that philosophy, unlike the specialized, empirical, scientific disciplines, is a *general science*, the aim of which is to acquire scientific (i.e. rationally controlled) knowledge of reality-*in-toto*. There are, of course, various specialized philosophies, such as the philosophy of religion, art, law, etc. But then the question arises what it is that justifies the concept of philosophy in all these sub-philosophies. In order to be able to answer this question, there must be a general philosophy which sets out to investigate and interpret reality-*in-toto* (*das Weltall*). In his systematic search for a conception of reality as a fulfilled (not a final!) totality, Rickert claims that the heterological distinction between 'real' reality of objects and 'virtual' reality of values is a constitutive component. In fact, as we shall see later, reality-*in-toto*, the admittedly awkward concept of *das Weltall*, is viewed by Rickert as a formal possibility rather than a material reality. It is a hypothesis, or better still a postulate, based upon the heterothesis of 'empirical reality' and 'ideal reality', rather than an empirically proven, ontological thesis.

It is this continuous interplay between seemingly opposite concepts which constitutes the basic dynamics in Rickert's concept formations. It prevented him from drifting off into conceptual realism (*Begriffsrealismus*) and its inevitably static, abstract and schematic rationalism on the one hand, and into naïve empirism and its inevitably unscientific irrationalism on the other hand.

Heterology is, as we shall see in Chapter Five, of crucial importance in the conceptual juxtaposition of 'nature' and 'culture', and concurrently in the methodological juxtaposition and mutual demarcation of Natural Science (*Naturwissenschaft*) and Cultural Science (*Kulturwissenschaft*) as two different yet complementary methodologies. They are not mutually exclusive, as is often believed by the adherents of so-called *Geisteswissenschaften*, but can be 'reconciled' heterologically.

The origin of Rickert's heterology of empirical, observable and virtual, understandable realities lies, of course, in Kant's analytic dichotomy of the *noumenon*, reality-in-itself that does exist but cannot be known on the one hand, and the *phaenomenon* on the other hand which is reality as it is perceived through our senses (*Anschauung*) and is then molded into knowledge by our reason (*Verstand*) through the *a priori* categories. This dualism, however, has led to a fatal misunderstanding of Kant's philosophy in the form of psychologism in epistemology and logic. Like Frege and the early Husserl<sup>33</sup>, Rickert has systematically and perpetually rejected psychologism in epistemology and logic. Kant's theory of the

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<sup>33</sup> In 1894 Frege published his in some instances rather sarcastic critique of Husserl's book on the philosophy of mathematics of 1891, attacking its allegedly psychologistic and subjectivist approach: Gottlob Frege, 'Rezension von: E. G. Husserl, Philosophie der Arithmetik. I' ('Review of: E. G. Husserl, Philosophy of Arithmetic. Vol. I') in: Gottlob Frege, *Kleine Schriften*, I 'Small Papers. Vol. I'. Angelelli (ed.), (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1990), pp. 179-193. Husserl adopted later an anti-psychologistic approach in his *Logische Untersuchungen, Bnd I: Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, ('Logical Investigations. Vol. I: Preface to Pure Logic'), 1900, (Tübingen: Max Niermeyer Verlag, 1968), pp. 50-192. But under the influence of Brentano's theory of intentionality and Dilthey's 'descriptive psychology' his phenomenology remained again close to a kind of psychologism which Frege and Rickert rejected radically and systematically. For a detailed analysis see Jos de Mul, *De tragedie van de eindigheid. Diltheys hermeneutiek van het leven*, ('The Tragedy of Finiteness. Dilthey's Hermeneutics of Life'), (Kampen: Kok Agora, 1993), pp. 253-266.

transcendental a priori as the non-empirical abode of the ‘aesthetic’ categories time and space, and the categories of reason (quality, quantity, relation, modality), driven by an ‘absolute consciousness’ (*transzendente Apperzeption*), did quite understandably, yet falsely, cause the idea of psychology as the core of Kantian ‘transcendentalism’. Or phrased differently, Kant’s ‘Copernican revolution’ which claimed that ‘reality as such’ (*das Ding-an-sich*) does exist objectively, but can as such not be known, that, in other words, knowledge is rather a construction of reality by the a priori, ‘innate’ categories imposed, as it were, on the sense impressions, has given rise to the idea that this is in essence a psychological construction of reality. Rickert rejects this misinterpretation persistently. This is not an anti-psychological animus on his part, because he respects the psychological discipline as an important empirical science.<sup>34</sup> Psychology is, according to him, an empirical discipline like the other (natural or cultural) sciences, and cannot therefore possibly be ‘elevated’ to the a priori status of ‘transcendentalism’. It is also, like the other sciences, a specialized and thus fragmentary discipline which cannot therefore possibly function as the foundation of a systematic philosophy. In other words, psychology should remain an empirical, scientific discipline and not pretend to provide philosophy with an alleged nucleus or foundation, otherwise philosophy degenerates into a metaphysical kind of psychologism. Rickert was quite positivistic in this. To him, psychology was an experimental and natural-scientific discipline, as for instance developed by Wilhelm Wundt. He was consequently in disagreement with Dilthey who developed a *geisteswissenschaftliche*, descriptive psychology.<sup>35</sup> This brand of hermeneutic, descriptive psychology allegedly offered a foundation for the normative (i.e. moral and aesthetic) statements within the *Geisteswissenschaften*. This, incidentally, stands also in strong opposition to Rickert’s methodological demand to abstain from normative value-judgments.<sup>36</sup> I shall return to Rickert’s anti-psychologism stance in Chapter Three.

### *The two neo-Kantian schools*

It is customary to distinguish two neo-Kantian schools: the so-called *South-West German School* or, as it was also called, the *Baden School*, in which Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915), Heinrich Rickert and Emil Lask (1875-1915) were the dominant thinkers, and the so-called *Marburg School*, which acquired fame by Hermann Cohen (1842-1918), Paul Natorp (1854-1925) and in particular Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945).<sup>37</sup> There was not much intellectual intercourse between the two schools. In their publications cross-references are either absent, or extremely sparse.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> For an early example of this misinterpretation of Rickert’s logical view of psychology as an empirical science see H. A. Leenmans, *De logica der geschiedenis-wetenschap van H. Rickert. Een critiek*, (‘The Logic of History by H. Rickert. A Critique’), (The Hague: no publisher mentioned, 1924).

<sup>35</sup> See e.g. his *Ideen über eine beschreibende und zergliedernde Psychologie*, (‘Ideas about a Descriptive and Dissecting Psychology’), 1894, in: Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. V, (Stuttgart: Teubner; and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1957, 2nd ed.), pp. 139-240.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Jos de Mul, *o.c.*, pp. 206-212.

<sup>37</sup> See Hans-Ludwig Ollig (ed.) *Neukantianismus*, (Neo-Kantianism), (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982). The volume contains several texts of the two neo-Kantian schools. Also: W. Flach, H. Holzhey, eds., *Erkenntnistheorie und Logik im Neukantianismus* (‘Epistemology and Logic in Neo-Kantianism’), (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1980). This book also contains several neo-Kantian texts.

<sup>38</sup> In Ernst Cassirer, *Zur Logik der Kulturwissenschaften. Fünf Studien*, (‘On the Logic of Cultural Sciences. Five Studies’), 1942, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961) Windelband and Rickert are only mentioned briefly. Neither Rickert’s voluminous volume *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* which is a fundamental discussion on the logic of the



Neo-Kantianism is often identified with the Marburg School, but the fact is that Cohen and Natorp moved away from transcendentalism. Cohen rejected Kant's separation of *Anschauung* and *Verstand*, claiming that knowledge emerges only from pure, creative thinking. After a return to orthodox Judaism, he moved to Berlin, where he taught at a Jewish theological seminary. Here he was more interested in religious issues of worldview than in epistemology and scientific philosophy. Natorp too moved away from transcendental philosophy in the direction of Platonism, emphasizing its mystical thinking and focusing on the subjective, concrete existence. Cassirer, who was initially under the strong influence of his teacher Cohen<sup>39</sup>, was a prolific writer, a great expert in the history of philosophy in general and of Kant's philosophy in particular.<sup>40</sup> Cassirer developed his neo-Kantianism into a cultural philosophy which, particularly in his celebrated *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, was closely connected with such cultural-scientific disciplines as cultural anthropology and comparative religion.<sup>41</sup> As I shall argue in the Conclusion, Cassirer was much more successful in his cultural philosophy than Rickert has been at the end of his life.

Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915) introduced the critical, yet debatable notion that Kant's vision of *Wissenschaft* was too one-sidedly oriented towards and influenced by the natural sciences. In his famous inaugural address as the *Rektor* (Vice-President) of the University of Strasburg, 1894, he argued that one should distinguish two basic approaches to reality which leads to two logically and methodologically different, yet not mutually exclusive sciences: *Geisteswissenschaften* ('sciences of the mind') and *Naturwissenschaften* ('sciences of nature'). There is not a principal difference between these two, but they should be distinguished methodologically: the former focus on what differentiates and is unique

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historical discipline, nor his shorter *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft* are referred to at all. His critique of Rickert's logic and methodology is proportionally sparse.

<sup>39</sup> At the end of his life Cassirer wrote an essay commemorating the hundredth birthday of Cohen: Ernst Cassirer, 'Hermann Cohen, 1842-1918', in: *Social Research*, vol. X:2, 1943, pp. 219-232.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Kants Leben und Lehre*, ('Kant's Life and Doctrine'), 1918, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft; Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2001; volume 8 of the Hamburg Edition of Cassirer's Collected Works in 25 volumes). Cassirer also co-edited the publication of Kant's collected works. For a complete bibliography of Cassirer see Raymond Klibansky, H.J. Paton (eds.), *Philosophy and History. The Ernst Cassirer Festschrift*, 1936, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), pp. 338-353.

<sup>41</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* ('Philosophy of Symbolic Forms'), three volumes, vol. One: *Die Sprache* ('Language'/'Speech'), vol. Two: *Das mythische Denken* ('Mythological Thought'), vol. Three: *Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis* ('Phenomenology of Knowledge'), 1925, (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 1997). This intellectual transition took place after his move to Hamburg University in June 1919. Here he got acquainted with the famous 'Cultural-Scientific Library Warburg', erected by the wealthy businessman Aby Warburg. The library harbored an enormous stock of historical, cultural-anthropological and sociological books which Cassirer used intensively while writing his three volumes on the philosophy of symbolic forms. According to Paetzold, 'Hamburg was the place where Cassirer became a cultural philosopher'. See Heinz Paetzold, *Ernst Cassirer. Von Marburg to New York. Eine philosophische Biographie*, ('Ernst Cassirer. From Marburg to New York. A Philosophical Biography'), (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), p.47. On Cassirer and the Warburg Library: *ibid.*, pp. 68-80. At the end of his life, living in the United States as a refugee (New Haven, 1941-1944; New York, 1944-1945) Cassirer expanded and intensified his interests in cultural philosophy. Cf. Paetzold, *o.c.*, pp. 191-222. See Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man. An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944; reprint: New York: Doubleday, 1951) and Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946).

(‘idiographic’), the latter on what is general and law like (‘nomothetic’).<sup>42</sup> We will discuss Windelband’s theory of the demarcation of the sciences in greater detail in Chapter Five. Rickert, as we will see then, elaborates on Windelband’s theory, yet rejects the concept *Geisteswissenschaft* as it suggests a psychologistic approach. After all, the concept *Geist* (spirit, mind, consciousness) is easily identified with *Seele* (soul, psyche). However, Rickert’s substitution of the concept *Geisteswissenschaft* by *Kulturwissenschaft* and of the concepts ‘idiographic’- ‘nomothetic’ by the concepts ‘individualizing’- ‘generalizing’ is, as we will see, more than just playing with words.<sup>43</sup>

### Composition

The following chapters are the result of a close reading and re-reading of Rickert’s publications. The main focus was on his books and less on his essays, since he incorporated the latter often verbatim in the former. I did, of course, read the essays and at times incorporated them in my discussion of Rickert’s theories, if they offered additional information. It is my contention that most of the (often critical) discussions of Rickert’s writings have not been the result of a careful reading and re-reading of his texts. They often discuss ideas and theories in a fragmentary manner which is not only unfair but what is worse scientifically reproachable.<sup>44</sup> In addition critics often repeat the criticism of other critics without apparently checking these criticisms by reading Rickert’s own texts. All this does, of course, not help at all to understand what Rickert actually meant to say. Therefore I found it necessary to read and re-read him closely and follow him, as it were, step by step, trying to understand his often complex and abstract, yet never boring and bone-dry argumentations without subjecting them to hasty judgments which are by definition almost always prejudgments.

I found it necessary to write this book in English. His *opus magnum* on the limits of Natural-Scientific concept formation which is, as we shall see in the fifth chapter, an elaborate logic of historical research, has been translated into English, albeit in an abridged edition.<sup>45</sup> His books on epistemology, methodology, logic and philosophy of values are not available in English. It is therefore hard for the Anglo-Saxon world to get acquainted with Rickert’s peculiar philosophy which at present is experiencing a modest renaissance in Europe. Hopefully, the present study may lead

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<sup>42</sup> Wilhelm Windelband, ‘Geschichte und Naturwissenschaft’ (‘History and Natural Science’), 1894, in: *Präludien. Aufsätze und Reden zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte*, (‘Preludes. Essays and Lectures on Philosophy and its History’), vol.2, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1915), pp. 136-160. Windelband was more a historian of philosophy than a philosopher of history. He earned fame in particular with his textbook that deservedly acquired the status of a ‘classic’, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, (‘Textbook of the History of Philosophy’), 1891, edited and enlarged with a chapter on philosophy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Heinz Heimsoeth, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1957, 15<sup>th</sup> ed.).

<sup>43</sup> It is in this context interesting to read Hempel’s essay ‘Explanation in Science and in History’, 1963, in: James H. Fetzer (ed.), *The Philosophy of Carl G. Hempel. Studies in Science, Explanation, and Rationality*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 276-296. Without mentioning them he addresses the same logical and methodological issues as Windelband and Rickert, albeit within the paradigm of analytic philosophy.

<sup>44</sup> A telling example presents R. G. Collingwood who in less than two pages summarizes and severely criticizes Rickert’s concept of history and his historical methodology: *The Idea of History*, 1946, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 168-170.

<sup>45</sup> Heinrich Rickert, *The Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science. A Logical Introduction to the Historical Sciences (abridged edition)*, edited and translated by Guy Oakes, o.c.

to more translations of Rickert's work.<sup>46</sup> But there is a more private reason for this English publication. I found it heuristically helpful to represent Rickert's ideas in English and to translate quotations from Rickert into English. I would find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to do so in the case of Hegel, Husserl or Heidegger, but to my pleasant surprise Rickert's German was, despite the complexity of his ideas, surprisingly transparent and, apart from a few technically philosophical concepts, not at all difficult to translate.

The first chapter presents a first introduction to Rickert's philosophy by means of a brief summary. It is meant to facilitate the reading of this book with a general overview that omits all the complex details of his philosophical system. The chapter can be read as a kind of map which indicates the main roads through the thicket of Rickert's thinking. Summaries are usually placed at the end of books. I find it much more helpful to start with one.

The second chapter deals with Rickert's critique of *Lebensphilosophie* (vitalism) which he rejects in so far as it presents a set of philosophical fads and fashions. However, in this critique too he argues in terms of heterology, that is, he is not a proponent of the abstract, lifeless and rationalist philosophy most vitalists object to. Throughout his philosophical thinking and writing Rickert searches for a connection between perception and reason, between senses and mind, between estheticism and rationalism. In addition he agrees with Kant that ethics (*praktische Vernunft*) has priority over thinking (*theoretische Vernunft*). Thinking, as we will see in the second chapter, ends up in judgments (*Urteile*) which are in fact acts related to values. Despite his criticism of American pragmatism he comes at distinct moments in his epistemology and philosophy of values close to a pragmatic and behaviorist position.

The third chapter focuses on the most difficult part of Rickert's philosophy: his epistemology and logic which is, again heterologically, tied to his ontology and, although almost residually, to metaphysics. It is necessary to delve into his often rather cumbersome epistemological reflections in order to understand his philosophy of values and his logic of the historical, cultural sciences.

The fourth chapter discusses his philosophy of values in which he, again heterologically, juxtaposes the observable and explainable reality of objects with the understandable and virtual reality of meanings and values. He distinguishes, as we shall see, three realms: first the reality of objective facts, second the reality of formal values, whereas the third realm, consisting of the transcendental Ego, connects these two heterologically into a total reality. The central concept here is *Aktsinn*, i.e. the meaning bestowing act which ties the second realm of values to the first realm of facts, events and objects. At this crucial point his transcendentalism results surprisingly in a theory of action. Beyond that reality lies the metaphysical world which cannot be reached by rational, scientific concepts but only suggested by symbols, similes, allegories. It lies beyond the reach of science but constitutes the coping-stone of his systematic philosophy, since it represents the final form of reality-*in-toto*.

The fifth chapter discusses Rickert's demarcation of Natural Science (*Naturwissenschaft*) and Cultural Science (*Kulturwissenschaft*) as two heterologically related approaches to reality. As in everyday life sensations and reflections, scientific

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<sup>46</sup> The books most appropriate for English translation are, in my view, the small, lucid *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft, o.c.*, the also lucidly written introduction to his own philosophy *Grundlegung der Philosophie, o.c.*, and in particular the critical and at times ironical study on vitalism which will be discussed extensively in Chapter Two: *Die Philosophie des Lebens, o.c.*

approaches to reality are either generalizing or individualizing. The generalizing approach is essentially ahistorical, whereas the individualizing approach is essentially historical. The former aims at law-like statements, whereas the latter is rather descriptive and sensitizing. In fact, although he did not formulate it explicitly so, Rickert constructed an ideal typical continuum between two heterological opposites. On this continuum the various empirical sciences are located – some more generalizing, like physics, chemistry, or experimental psychology, some more individualizing like history and cultural sociology, others somewhere in the middle of the continuum.

The sixth and final chapter presents a discussion of Rickert's relevance, in particular in view of the cultural sciences. There is no one-to-one, direct influence to speak of. However, in various publications there is a strong echo of his work. In some cases, there is an influence on Rickert's thinking in return. I shall single out some of the most prominent examples of this echo and its responsive chord. Georg Simmel, Emil Lask, Gustav Radbruch, Johan Huizinga, Karl Mannheim and in particular Max Weber will be reviewed. These are not exhaustive representations and analyses of their writings but rather brief discussions of their intellectual link with Rickert's work.

The conclusion will present a personal, critical evaluation of Rickert's oeuvre and will end with the question, what then Rickert's relevance today actually could be.